CRIME

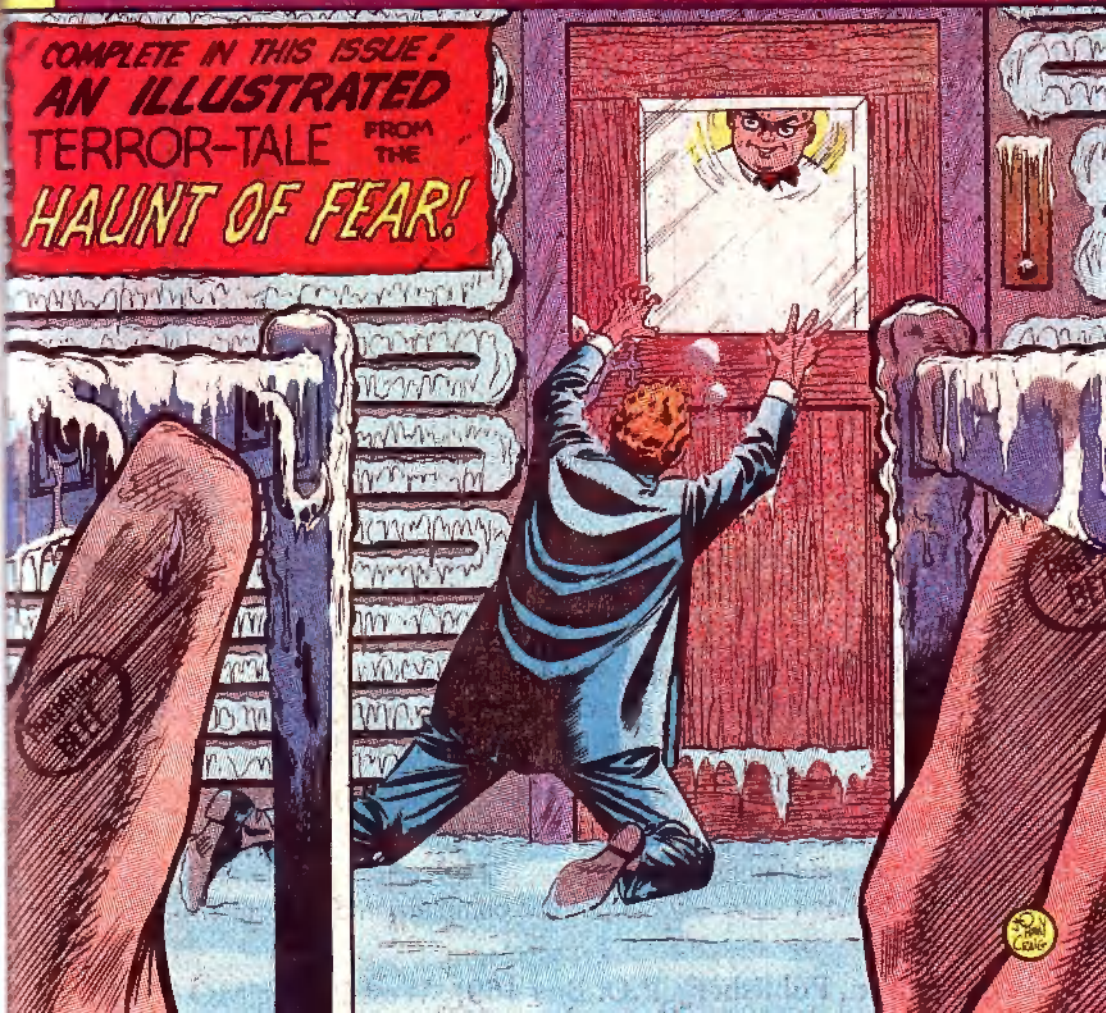
AN ENTERTAINING COMIC EC

CRIME SUSPENSTORIES

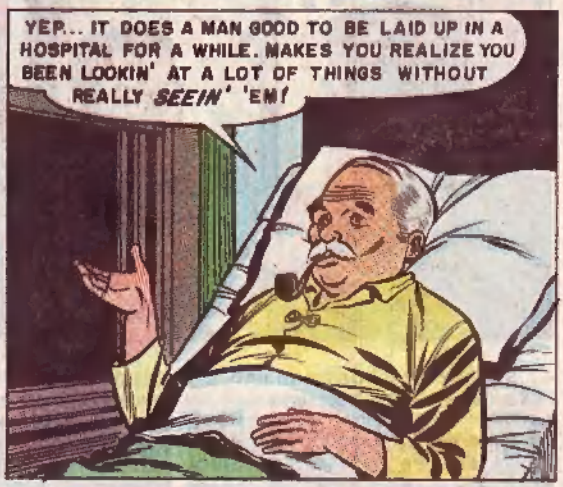
AN ENTERTAINING COMIC EC

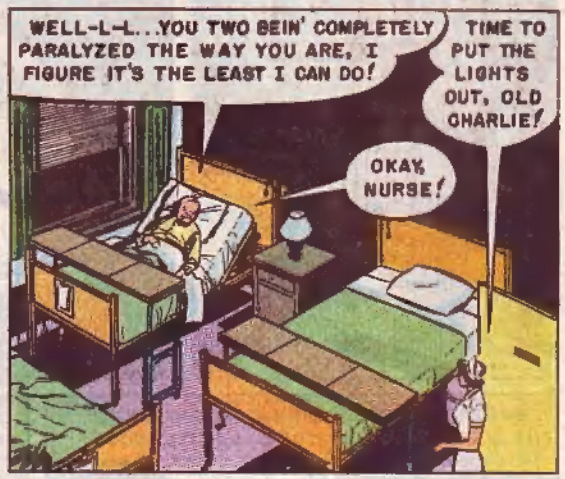
REPRINT EDITION

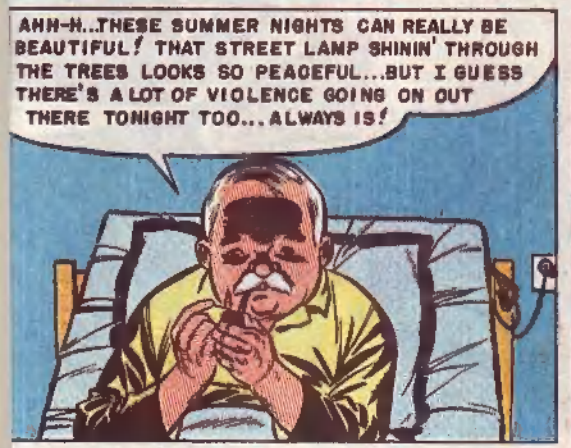
NO. 8



OUT OF THE FRYING PAN...







AS OLD CHARLIE'S EYES SLEEPILY CLOSE... NOT TOO FAR AWAY IN A TENEMENT, HANK BOWERS ARTFULLY FINISHES BOWING HIS TIE...

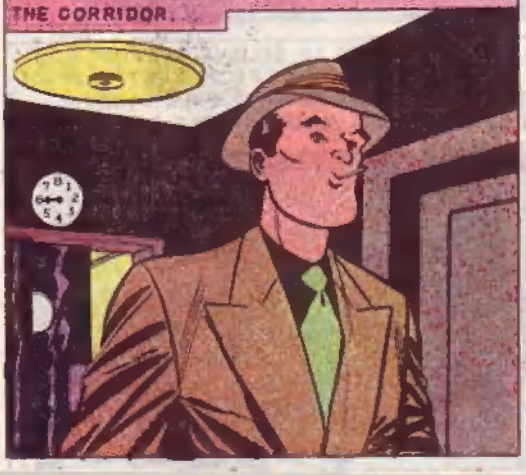
...COMBS HIS HAIR FOR THE UMPTEENTH TIME...

...SLIPS ON HIS COAT AND HAT AND LEAVES THE BUILDING...

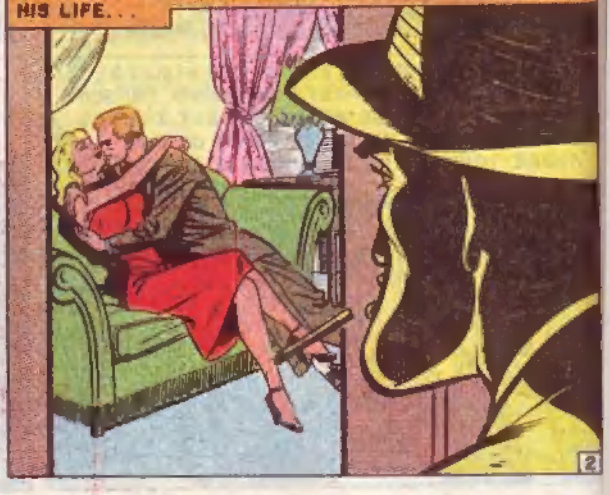
HE RIDES SWIFTLY, LIGHTLY, THROUGH THE CITY STREETS...

...TO HIS GIRL-FRIEND'S HOUSE...

...TAKES THE SELF-SERVICE ELEVATOR TO THE SIXTH FLOOR, STRIDES JAUNTILY DOWN THE CORRIDOR...



...AND OPENS HER DOOR... TO GET THE SURPRISE OF HIS LIFE...



HANK!
HEY! WHO TH...?

I'M GETTING OUT OF HERE!

IT WON'T DO YOU NO GOOD TO RUN! I'M GONNA GETCHA ANYWAY!

THE TWO MEN RACE THROUGH THE DESERTED STREETS...ONE HOPING TO PRESERVE LIFE... THE OTHER TRYING TO DESTROY!

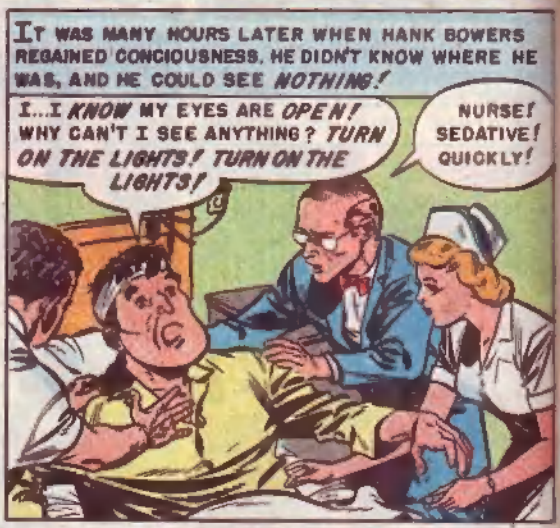
BIT BY BIT THE GAP BETWEEN THEM CLOSES! IN A LAST FRANTIC ATTEMPT TO ESCAPE, THE HUNTED DARTS INTO AN ALLEY...
DEAD END!

KEEP BACK! KEEP BACK, OR I'LL BASH YOUR HEAD IN!
I'LL TEACH YOU TO MUSCLE IN ON MY DAME!

BLAM!
BLAM! BLAM! BLAM!

(PANT) THERE! THAT'LL (GASP!) TEACH HIM TO... MAKE A PLAY... (GASP!) FOR MY...OHH-H-H! MY HEAD! I... I... HURTS (PANT!) FEEL DIZZY!

HELLO, POLICE? I WANT TO REPORT A MURDER! YES... I SAW IT ALL!


IT WAS MANY HOURS LATER WHEN HANK BOWERS REGAINED CONCIOUSNESS. HE DIDN'T KNOW WHERE HE WAS, AND HE COULD SEE *NOTHING!*
I...I *KNOW* MY EYES ARE *OPEN!* WHY CAN'T I SEE ANYTHING? *TURN ON THE LIGHTS! TURN ON THE LIGHTS!*
NURSE! SEDATIVE! QUICKLY!

STRONG HANDS GRASPED HIM...THE STING OF A NEEDLE JABBED HIS ARM...
I'M BLIND! I'M BLIND! I CAN'T SEE!
CALM DOWN, BOWERS! IT'S ONLY TEMPORARY!
THIS INJECTION WILL QUIET HIM! HE'LL BE ASLEEP IN TWO MINUTES!

A GREAT CALM BEGAN TO DESCEND ON HANK. HIS BODY WENT LIMP AND THE STRONG HANDS RELEASED HIM. THE VOICES SEEMED TO COME FROM FAR AWAY...
THAT BLOW HE RECEIVED ON THE HEAD WAS WHAT DID IT!
IF YOU ASK ME, I THINK HE'S BETTER OFF BLIND!
SURE! AS SOON AS HIS EYESIGHT RETURNS, HE'LL GO ON TRIAL FOR MURDER!

THE BLACKNESS THAT ENVELOPED HANK SEEMED DENSER NOW... AND THE VOICES WERE GROWING WEAKER...

IT'S AN OPEN AND SHUT CASE! THEY FOUND THE GUN IN HIS HAND!

...AND HIS OWN GIRL FRIEND IS GOING TO TESTIFY AGAINST HIM!

NOT ONLY THAT! THERE WAS EVEN AN EYE-WITNESS TO THE KILLING!

BUT THEY WON'T PUT HIM ON TRIAL UNTIL HE GETS WELL!

DOESN'T MATTER! HE'S BOUND TO GET THE CHAIR!

...HASN'T GOT A CHANCE!

THE FOLLOWING DAY...

HEH, HEH! NOW THOSE TWO KIDS ARE SQUABBLIN' OVER THAT TOY! HEH! AND HERE COME THEIR MOTHERS!

JERK!

...AND IN THE NEXT FEW DAYS...

THAT YOUNG, CURLY-HEADED MAN IS WALKIN' THROUGH THE PARK WITH HIS GIRL AGAIN! THEY MAKE A *NICE* COUPLE...

DOESN'T HE EVER SHUT UP?

AND ONE MORNING WHEN HANK AWOKE...

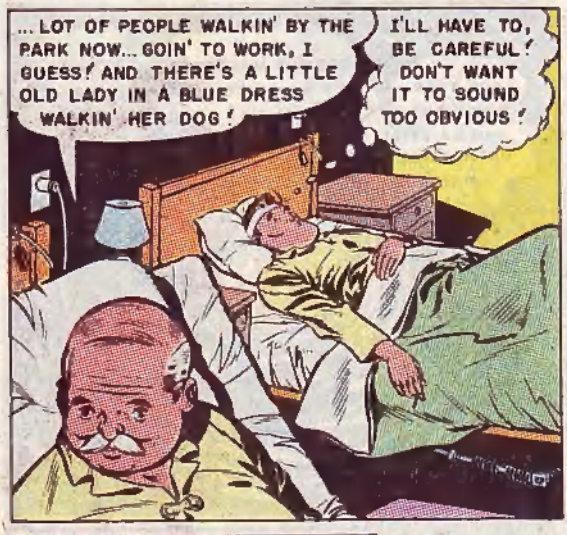
HEY! I CAN SEE A BIT BETTER TODAY! INSTEAD OF TOTAL BLACKNESS, EVERYTHING LOOKS LIKE VAGUE MASSES OF DARK GREY!

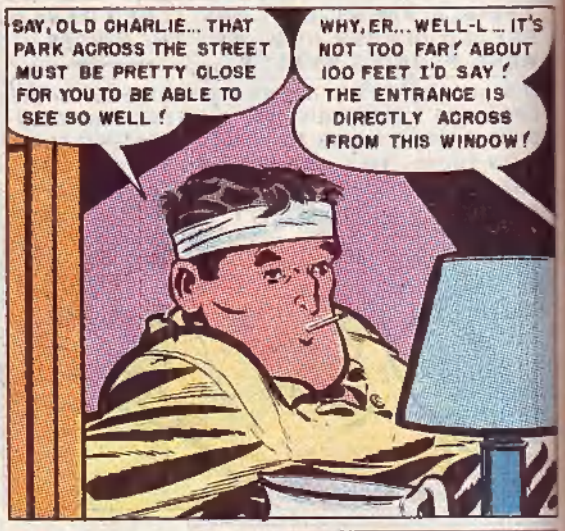
CAN'T SEE WELL ENOUGH TO MAKE THINGS OUT, BUT MY EYESIGHT *IS* GETTING BETTER! HMM...THAT ONLY BRINGS ME THAT MUCH CLOSER TO THE *CHAIR*...

AH, IT'S A FINE DAY! HEAR THOSE BIRDS SINGING IN THE TREES 'CROSS THE STREET IN THE PARK?

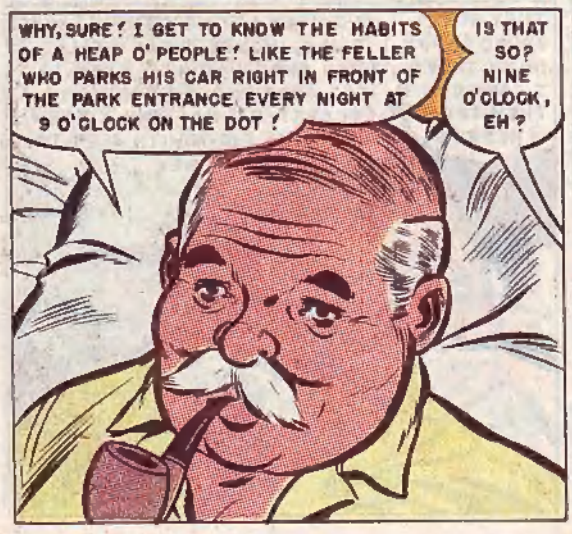
THEY SURE SOUND HAPPY, DON'T THEY? I CAN SEE THEM FROM HERE!

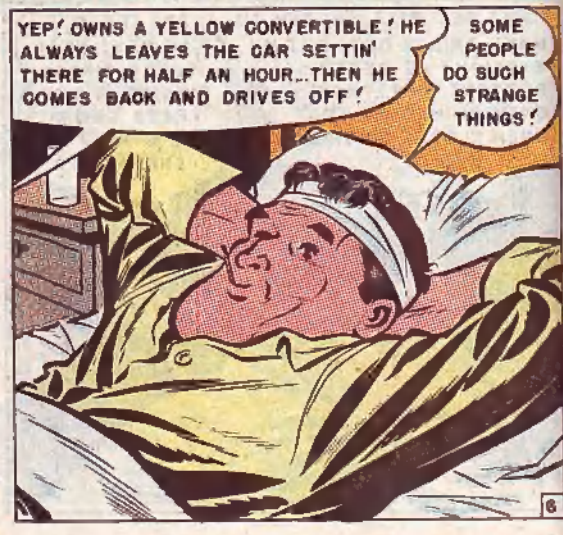
IF I KEEP ACTING COMPLETELY BLIND, MAYBE I CAN STALL LONG ENOUGH FOR MY EYES TO GET GOOD ENOUGH FOR ME TO ESCAPE! HA! HA! AND I KNOW JUST THE BIG-MOUTH JERK TO HELP ME!





NOT WISHING TO OVERPLAY HIS HAND, HANK SAID NO MORE.... UNTIL LATE THAT AFTERNOON...





IT WAS LATER THAT DAY THAT THE DOCTOR AND NURSE CAME. HANK REMAINED STILL, FEIGNING SLEEP...

HE'S ASLEEP!

JUST AS WELL! IT'LL PROBABLY BE THE LAST DECENT SLEEP HE'LL GET! THEY'RE GOING TO TAKE HIM AWAY TO JAIL TOMORROW MORNING, WHETHER HIS EYES ARE WELL OR NOT!

LUVVA MIKE! ONCE THEY GET ME OUT OF HERE, I WON'T STAND A CHANCE! I'LL HAVE TO MAKE MY ESCAPE *TONIGHT!* YEAH! TONIGHT...AT *NINE O'CLOCK!*

NERVOUSLY, HANK WAITED AS THE HOURS TICKED BY! THEN...

IT'S *NINE O'CLOCK!* THAT GUY BETTER HAVE PARKED HIS CAR, BECAUSE HERE I GO!

AH! HERE'S THE WINDOW!

HEY! WHERE DO YOU THINK *YOU'RE* GOIN'? GET BACK IN BED!

...ONLY A FIFTEEN FOOT DROP TO THE GROUND!

HA, HA! JUST LIKE OLD CHARLIE SAID! NOW STRAIGHT AHEAD...TO THE CAR IF IT'S THERE, OR INTO THE PARK IF IT'S NOT! *FULL SPEED AHEAD!* %#!@! WISH I COULD SEE BETTER!

SLAM!

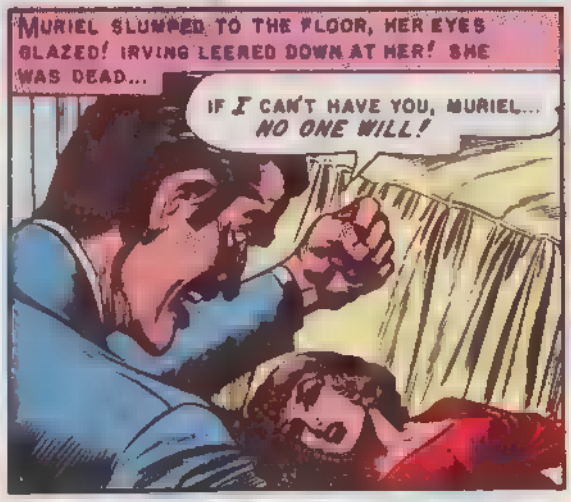
OOOOHH-H! MY FACE...HEAD! I MUST'VE RUN THE WRONG WAY! (GASP!) GOTTA GET UP! GOTTA FIND THE RIGHT WAY! HURRY! (GASP) GUARD'S COMIN'!
WHAT'S THE MATTER? CAN'T FEEL ANYTHING BUT BRICKS! THERE'S NO WAY OUT! THERE'S...(SOB!) NOTHING HERE BUT FOUR BRICK WALLS!
(SOB!) WHAT A SAP I'VE BEEN! ALL THE TIME THERE HASN'T BEEN ANYTHING (SOB) OUT HERE AT ALL! NOTHING BUT BRICK WALLS!
OKAY, BOWERS! CATCH THIS ROPE SO WE CAN PULL YOU UP!
WHAT HAPPENED, OLD CHARLIE? WHY COULDN'T HE REACH THE PARK?
WELL, ER... YOU SEE, HE BROKE HIS ANKLE BY JUMPING OUT THE WINDOW! COULDN'T RUN!
OH...GEE! PRETTY DESPERATE, WASN'T HE?
GUESS SO, HERB! MOST MURDERERS ARE WHEN THEIR JUDGEMENT TIME DRAWS NEAR!
OH, WELL! WHAT'S GOING ON OUTSIDE, OLD CHARLEY?
NOTHIN' MUCH RIGHT NOW! KINDA PEACEFUL AND QUIET-LIKE! THAT STREET-LAMP IS SHININ'...AND A BREEZE IS STIRRIN' THE TREES...
OH...THERE'S THAT CURLY-HEADED MAN WALKIN' WITH HIS GIRL! THEY'RE SUCH A NICE COUPLE... SO HAPPY-LOOKIN'! AND YET...I BET THERE'S A HEAP O' PEOPLE IN TROUBLE TONIGHT!
-THE END-

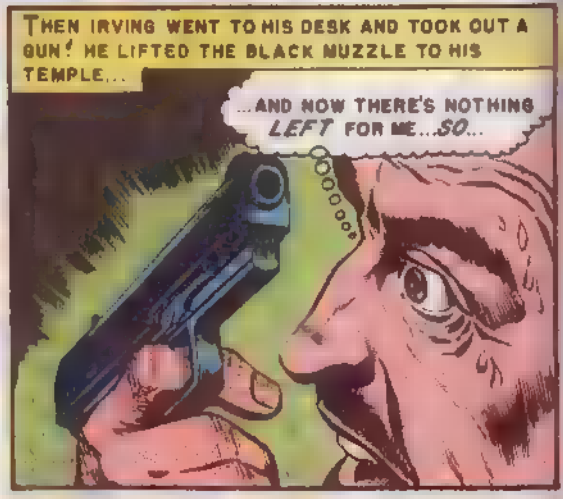
A TRACE OF MURDER!

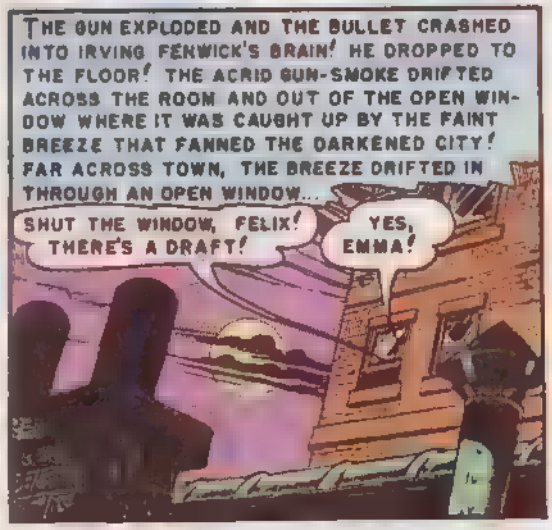
THEY CLINKED GLASSES, AND MURIEL DRANK DOWN THE POISONED WINE! THEN SHE STOOD UP...
WELL, I GUESS I'LL PACK MY THINGS!
NEED HELP, DEAR?

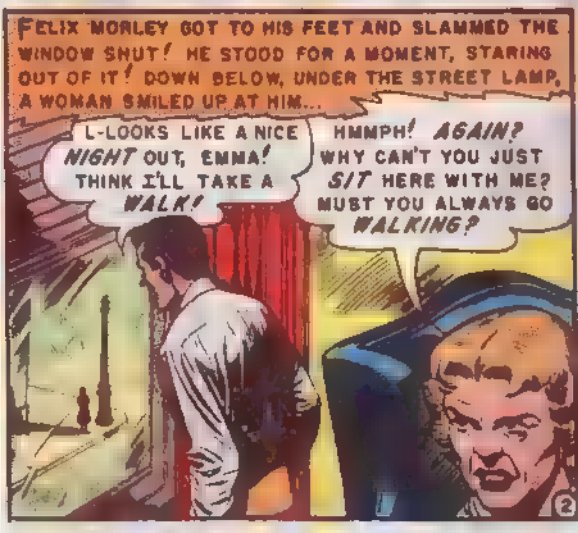
MURIEL WENT INTO THE BEDROOM...
NO, THANK YOU, IRVING! I CAN MANAGE!
SUIT YOURSELF!

IRVING SAT IN THE LIVING-ROOM, LISTENING TO THE DRAWERS OPENING AND CLOSING AS MURIEL PACKED! THEN...AFTER A WHILE...
IRVING! I...I...
YOU CALL ME, DEAR?


MURIEL SLUMPED TO THE FLOOR, HER EYES GLAZED! IRVING LEERED DOWN AT HER! SHE WAS DEAD...
IF I CAN'T HAVE YOU, MURIEL... NO ONE WILL!


THEN IRVING WENT TO HIS DESK AND TOOK OUT A GUN! HE LIFTED THE BLACK MUZZLE TO HIS TEMPLE...
...AND NOW THERE'S NOTHING LEFT FOR ME...SO...


THE GUN EXPLODED AND THE BULLET CRASHED INTO IRVING FENWICK'S BRAIN! HE DROPPED TO THE FLOOR! THE ACRID GUN-SMOKE DRIFTED ACROSS THE ROOM AND OUT OF THE OPEN WINDOW WHERE IT WAS CAUGHT UP BY THE FAINT BREEZE THAT FANNED THE DARKENED CITY! FAR ACROSS TOWN, THE BREEZE DRIFTED IN THROUGH AN OPEN WINDOW...
SHUT THE WINDOW, FELIX! THERE'S A DRAFT!
YES, EMMA!


FELIX MORLEY GOT TO HIS FEET AND SLAMMED THE WINDOW SHUT! HE STOOD FOR A MOMENT, STARING OUT OF IT! DOWN BELOW, UNDER THE STREET LAMP, A WOMAN SMILED UP AT HIM...
L-LOOKS LIKE A NICE NIGHT OUT, EMMA! THINK I'LL TAKE A WALK!
HMMPH! AGAIN? WHY CAN'T YOU JUST SIT HERE WITH ME? MUST YOU ALWAYS GO WALKING?

FELIX WASN'T LISTENING TO EMMA AS HE WENT FOR HIS HAT! HIS MIND WAS FAR AWAY... ON THE WOMAN DOWN BELOW...

YOU'RE *TIRED* OF ME! *THAT'S* IT! YOU'RE *BORED!* YOU...

DON'T WAIT UP FOR ME, EMMA!

FELIX HURRIED DOWN THE STEPS AND OUT OF THE APARTMENT BUILDING! HE NODDED TO THE WOMAN ACROSS THE STREET, AND SHE TURNED INTO THE PARK! FELIX CROSSED OVER AND FOLLOWED! THEN...

OH, FELIX! I THOUGHT YOU'D *NEVER* COME!

EMMA WAS *DIFFICULT* TONIGHT, HELEN!

THEY CLUNG THERE IN THE DARK SHADOWS BENEATH THE TREES...

I CAN'T *STAND* IT ANY LONGER, FELIX! YOU'VE GOT TO *LEAVE* HER! WE CAN'T GO *ON* LIKE THIS... MEETING SECRETLY...

YOU MEAN, *DIVORCE* HER, HELEN?

I'D BE *CRAZY* TO DIVORCE EMMA! I MARRIED HER FOR HER *MONEY!* DO YOU THINK I *LIKE* BEING TIED TO AN *OLDER WOMAN?*

MONEY... *MONEY!* THAT'S ALL YOU THINK ABOUT! IF YOU *LOVED* ME...

I *DO LOVE YOU,* HELEN! BUT... THERE *MUST* BE *ANOTHER WAY!* IF I RAN OFF WITH *YOU,* WE'D LIVE LIKE *ANIMALS,* SCROUNGING FOR *EVERY CENT!* *EMMA'S MONEY* WOULD BE *MINE* IF... *IF...*

FELIX! WHAT ARE YOU *SAYING?* PLEASE! DON'T *STARE* LIKE THAT! YOU... YOU *FRIGHTEN* ME!

GIVE ME A LITTLE *TIME,* HELEN! LET ME *WORK SOMETHING OUT!*

ALL RIGHT! BUT DON'T DO ANYTHING *WRONG,* FELIX! I... I WOULDN'T WANT *THAT!*

MEANWHILE, ACROSS TOWN... IN THE APARTMENT OF IRVING AND MURIEL FENWICK...

THAT WRAPS IT UP, CHIEF! A NEAT CASE OF *MURDER* AND *SUICIDE!*

OKAY, LIEUTENANT! NOTIFY THEIR RELATIVES! I'LL MAKE OUT THE REPORT!

THE NEXT DAY, AS FELIX WAS STROLLING DOWNTOWN...

EXTRA! EXTRA! READ ALL ABOUT IT! HUSBAND POISONS WIFE... THEN SHOOTS HIMSELF! EXTRA...

POISON! THAT'S IT! I REMEMBER READING ABOUT IT IN COLLEGE! THERE ARE POISONS THAT LEAVE NO TRACE!

FELIX RUSHED TO THE PUBLIC LIBRARY...

WILL YOU PLEASE DIRECT ME TO THE SECTION ON CHEMISTRY!

ON THE FAR END OF THE ROOM TO THE LEFT, SIR!

THAT AFTERNOON, WHILE FELIX SEARCHED FOR THE INFORMATION HE WAS LOOKING FOR, MURIEL FENWICK'S FUNERAL WAS BEING HELD IN GREENTREE CEMETERY...

SOB, SOB! POOR MURIEL!

WHAT ABOUT YOUR BROTHER-IN-LAW, IRVING? WHERE IS HE BEING BURIED?

FOR MY PART, THEY CAN BURY HIM IN POTTER'S FIELD...THE ROTTEN MURDERER!

AT THE PUBLIC LIBRARY...

AH! HERE IT IS! A SOLUTION OF CENSORED AND CENSORED, TWO ORDINARY ITEMS IN EVERY-DAY USE AROUND THE AVERAGE HOME, PRODUCES A TOXIC, NON-TRACEABLE POISON*!

*NATURALLY YOUR EDITORS FEEL IT IS NOT ADVISABLE TO DIVULGE THIS DANGEROUS INFORMATION...HENCE THE CENSORSHIP OF THESE 'COMMON ITEMS!'

LATER THAT DAY, FELIX STOPPED OFF AT A GROCERY STORE WHERE HE WAS NOT KNOWN...

I'D LIKE A SMALL CENSORED AND A LARGE CAN OF CENSORED!

YES, SIR! WILL THAT BE ALL?

...AND THEN MADE HIS WAY HOME WITH THE TWO EVERYDAY ITEMS THAT IN COMBINATION PRODUCE A LETHAL NON-TRACEABLE POISON...

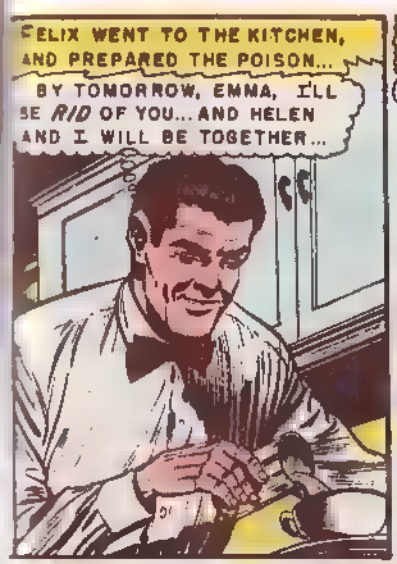
FELIX? THAT YOU?

YES, EMMA!

THAT NIGHT...

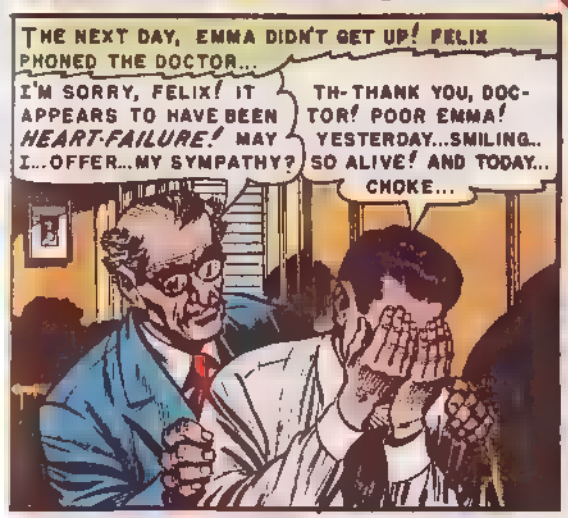
HOW ABOUT A CUP OF COFFEE, DEAR?

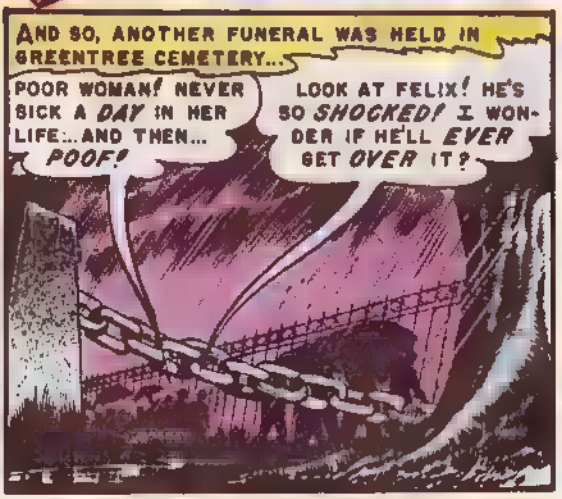
WHY, FELIX! HOW NICE OF YOU TO OFFER! I'D LOVE ONE!


FELIX WENT TO THE KITCHEN, AND PREPARED THE POISON...
BY TOMORROW, EMMA, I'LL BE RID OF YOU... AND HELEN AND I WILL BE TOGETHER...

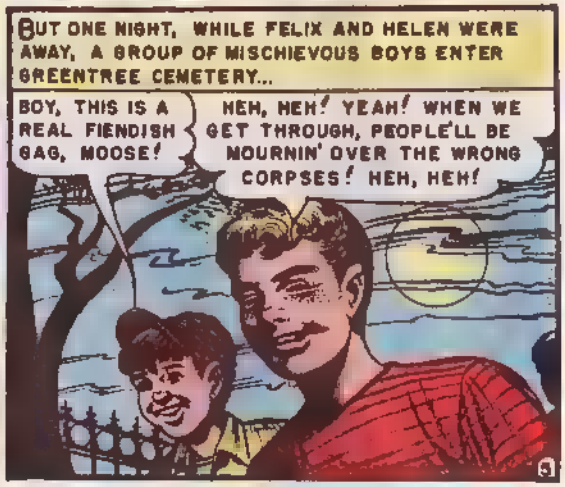
HE PUT A LARGE DOSE INTO EMMA'S COFFEE...
HERE YOU ARE, DEAR!
THANK YOU, FELIX!

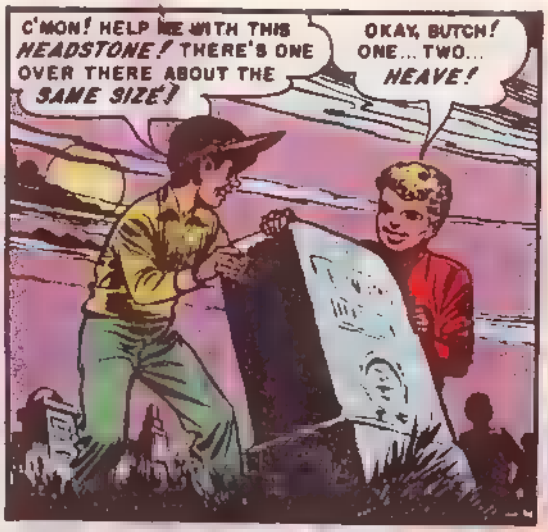
EMMA SIPPED THE COFFEE, FINALLY FINISHING IT...
NOT THAT I'M COMPLAINING, FELIX! IT WAS SWEET OF YOU... BUT... YOU DO MAKE TERRIBLE COFFEE! IT WAS BITTER!
WAS IT, EMMA? I'M SO SORRY!

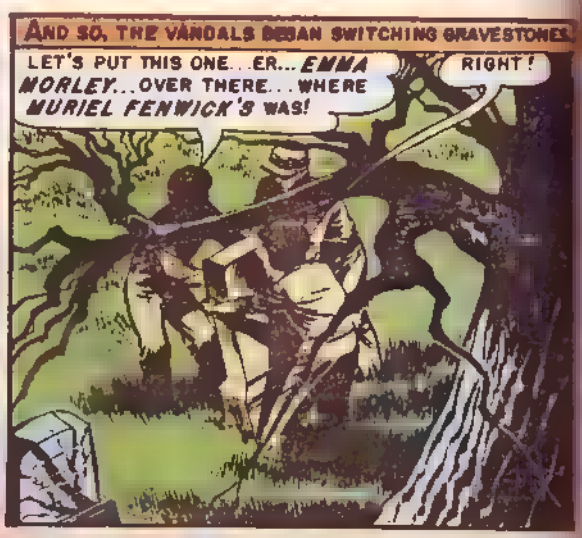

THE NEXT DAY, EMMA DIDN'T GET UP! FELIX PHONED THE DOCTOR...
I'M SORRY, FELIX! IT APPEARS TO HAVE BEEN HEART-FAILURE! MAY I... OFFER... MY SYMPATHY?
TH-THANK YOU, DOCTOR! POOR EMMA! YESTERDAY... SMILING... SO ALIVE! AND TODAY... CHOKE...


AND SO, ANOTHER FUNERAL WAS HELD IN GREENTREE CEMETERY...
POOR WOMAN! NEVER SICK A DAY IN HER LIFE... AND THEN... POOF!
LOOK AT FELIX! HE'S SO SHOCKED! I WONDER IF HE'LL EVER GET OVER IT?

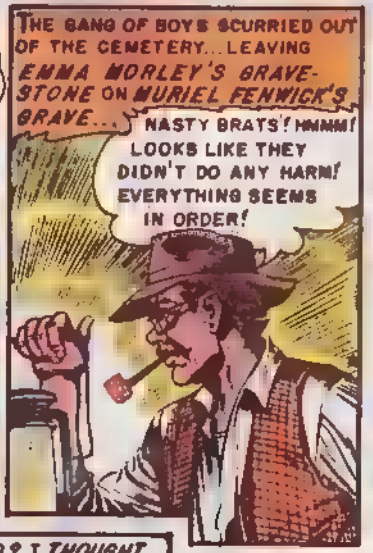
BUT FELIX GOT OVER IT! IN FACT, HE TOOK A LONG OCEAN TRIP TO HELP... WITH HELEN...
OH, FELIX, DEAR! NOW NOTHING STANDS IN OUR WAY! WE'RE TOGETHER!
AND I HAVE HER MONEY! WE'RE SET FOR LIFE!

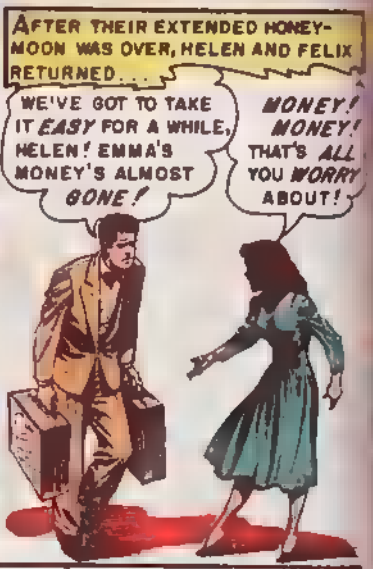

BUT ONE NIGHT, WHILE FELIX AND HELEN WERE AWAY, A GROUP OF MISCHIEVOUS BOYS ENTER GREENTREE CEMETERY...
BOY, THIS IS A REAL FIENDISH GAG, MOOSE!
HEH, HEH! YEAH! WHEN WE GET THROUGH, PEOPLE'LL BE MOURNIN' OVER THE WRONG CORPSES! HEH, HEH!


C'MON! HELP ME WITH THIS HEADSTONE! THERE'S ONE OVER THERE ABOUT THE SAME SIZE!
OKAY, BUTCH! ONE... TWO... HEAVE!


AND SO, THE VANDALS BEGAN SWITCHING GRAVESTONES.
LET'S PUT THIS ONE...ER... EMMA MORLEY...OVER THERE...WHERE MURIEL FENWICK'S WAS!
RIGHT!

HEY! SOMEONE'S COMIN'!
CHICKY! IT'S THE CARETAKER! LET'S SCRAM!


THE GANG OF BOYS SCURRIED OUT OF THE CEMETERY...LEAVING EMMA MORLEY'S GRAVESTONE ON MURIEL FENWICK'S GRAVE...
NASTY BRATS! HMMM! LOOKS LIKE THEY DIDN'T DO ANY HARM! EVERYTHING SEEMS IN ORDER!


AFTER THEIR EXTENDED HONEYMOON WAS OVER, HELEN AND FELIX RETURNED...
WE'VE GOT TO TAKE IT EASY FOR A WHILE, HELEN! EMMA'S MONEY'S ALMOST GONE!
MONEY! MONEY! THAT'S ALL YOU WORRY ABOUT!

SURE IT IS! WHY DO YOU THINK I KILLED...
KILLED? I THOUGHT SHE...HER HEART..

HER HEART! DON'T BE A FOOL, HELEN! I POISONED HER! I DID IT FOR US!
FOR US? MURDER! YOU MUST BE MAD! I WON'T STAY HERE WITH A MURDERER!

YOU'LL *STAY* AND *LIKE IT!* YOU WOULDN'T WANT TO *END UP LIKE HER*...WOULD YOU, HELEN?

N-NO! SOB, SOB! I...I DIDN'T MEAN IT, FELIX! I...I'M SORRY!

THE NEXT DAY, AT POLICE HEADQUARTERS...

HE...HE SAID HE *POISONED HER!* HE *THREATENED* ME! SAID I'D END UP LIKE *HER* IF I *TALKED!* YOU'VE GOT TO *PROTECT* ME!

OKAY, OKAY! TAKE IT *EASY*, MRS. MORLEY!

POLICE H.Q.

LATER, FELIX HAD A VISITOR...

SHE'S *CRAZY*, LIEUTENANT! I NEVER SAID *ANY SUCH THING!* MY WIFE HAS BEEN *NERVOUS* LATELY! SHE...

THEN YOU WON'T MIND IF WE *EXHUME* YOUR EX-WIFE'S BODY FOR AN *AUTOPSY*, EH, MR. MORLEY?

WHY, NOT AT ALL! I HAVE NOTHING TO HIDE! GO RIGHT AHEAD!

THANKS, MR. MORLEY! WE WILL! THAT'S GREENTREE CEMETERY, EH?

AND SO, THE BODY BENEATH THE TOMBSTONE MARKED 'EMMA MORLEY' WAS EXHUMED...

WE'VE UNCOVERED THE COFFIN, CHIEF!

OKAY! DRAG IT UP AND SHIP THE REMAINS TO THE LAB! WE'LL SETTLE THIS ONCE AND FOR ALL!

THE AUTOPSY WAS PERFORMED! TRACES OF ARSENIC WERE FOUND! FELIX MORLEY WAS ARRESTED...

WHAT'S THE *MEANING* OF THIS?

IT MEANS WE'RE HOLDING YOU FOR *MURDER*, MORELY! WE'VE FOUND TRACES OF *ARSENIC* IN YOUR WIFE'S REMAINS!

ARSENIC! THAT'S *IMPOSSIBLE!* I'M BEING *FRAMED!* THE POISON I USED LEAVES *NO TRACE!* IT...UH...I...

DID YOU GET THAT CONFESSION, SERGEANT?

GOT IT, CHIEF!

THE END

DOUBLE-CROSS

Ever since they had pulled that hundred grand job up in Scranton, the Law had been nipping at their heels. They were so busy running for their lives that Morton didn't have a spare second to puzzle over what he was going to do about the loot. But now, at long last, they had outrun the cops . . . and Morton realized it was time for a bright boy like himself to start figuring the angles.

It was only a day-or-so after they found the motor court and stopped running that Morton came up with his brain-child . . . the big double-cross which was going to put him on easy street. No reason why *he* shouldn't have ALL the dough, was there? And there was an added gimmick he was able to fit into his scheme: he had pulled the job with Ben Carlisle . . . and Donna, Ben's moll! Morton hated Ben's guts . . . and with the same degree of vehemence he loved the comely Donna. So his scheme came down to this: get Donna to set Ben up for the killing, step in and bump off his partner personally, then amscray with Donna, who had more than once hinted that she was ready to take a runout powder on Ben. Simple? You can say *that* again!

Morton and Donna made their plans carefully, getting together for whispered conversations a dozen times a day. They decided on the third night of their stop-over at the motor court . . . the double-cross they doped out was so neat that it would not only eliminate Ben from the swag and from Morton's romantic yearnings, but it would also take care of the *corpus delicti* until Morton and Donna were far-far away!

The trunk was what made it all possible! Donna had insisted on lugging it around in the back of the car ever since they had first planned to knock over the job up in Scranton. After she had taken care of drugging the unsuspecting Ben, she was to slip his unconscious body into that trunk of hers, and slam the lid. Then, because she was squeamish about putting the slug to her own husband, Morton would wander along and empty his gun into Ben's improvised coffin. Within 5 minutes Morton would be on his way . . . in Ben's car, with Ben's wife at his side, and Ben's share of the dough in his own pocket! A dream of a double-cross!

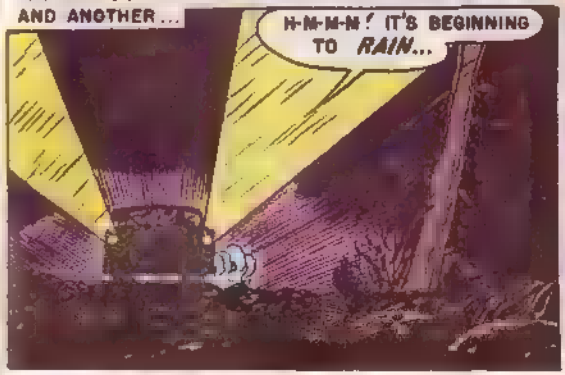
* * * * *

Morton listened outside the cabin door for a few minutes, then turned the knob and let himself in. The trunk was standing there just as Donna had promised . . . the cabin was otherwise empty. Silly the way some of these babes will put the finger on a man, but grow faint at the sight of his blood . . . Morton thought to himself as he slipped his roscoe from its holster. Now there was a visible rattling from inside the trunk, and a stifled moan, and Morton reasoned that Ben had regained consciousness and was struggling to get free. Morton levelled his gun, and with a grim smile, emptied it into the side of the trunk. There was only a single mournful shriek, then nothing but the sound of the bullets tearing through cardboard and thin metal and flesh. Morton turned away, his mind already occupied with plans for the getaway dash with Donna, when he came face-to-face with Ben Carlisle, smiling at him from the cabin door!

"Mighty neat," said Ben, his finger tightening around the trigger of the automatic leveled at Mortons' head. "Even though I knew my wife . . . your lady-love . . . was getting set to pull out on me, I felt kinda funny about bumping her off myself! Sentimental, I s'pose! But when I suddenly tumbled to your plan for *me*, I knew I could rely on my partner to kill whatever was stashed away inside that trunk! That took care of one of you . . . and now for the other . . ."

THE ESCAPED MANIAC!

THE ENGINE HUMMED CONTENTEDLY AS I GUIDED THE CAR ALONG THE HIGHWAY! BEFORE ME, THE HEADLIGHT BEAMS REACHED OUT, SUCKED IN THE ROAD AHEAD, AND SWEPT IT BENEATH THE SPEEDING WHEELS! SUDDENLY A DROP OF WATER SPLASHED AGAINST THE WINDSHIELD AND RAN DOWN IN A CROOKED PATH! THEN ANOTHER... AND ANOTHER...



I FLICKED ON THE WINDSHIELD WIPERS AND THEY BEGAN TO BEAT A STEADY RHYTHM AS THEY CUT TWO SEMI-CIRCULAR CLEAR SPOTS IN THE RAIN-DRENCHED GLASS! SUDDENLY, THE HEADLIGHTS... KNIFING THROUGH THE GLISTENING DOWNPOUR... FELL UPON A FIGURE STANDING IN THE ROAD... WAVING...

I PULLED UP ALONGSIDE THE STRANGER IN THE ROAD AND OPENED THE CAR DOOR...

HOP IN, BUDDY! I'M HEADED WEST!

THANKS! THAT'S SWELL! I'M GOIN' CROSS-COUNTRY MYSELF!

I EYED HIM! HE WAS UNSHAVEN...POORLY DRESSED...WITH HOLLOW, STARING EYES...

THAT RAIN CAME UP SO FAST, I DIDN'T EVEN HAVE TIME TO TAKE COVER...

YOU LOOK IT! YOUR CLOTHES ARE *SOAKED*...

GOT A HEATER? I'LL DRY OUT IN A JIFFY!

GO AHEAD! TURN 'ER ON!

THE STRANGER REACHED DOWN AND TURNED A KNOB ON THE DASHBOARD! SUDDENLY, THE CAR WAS FILLED WITH MUSIC! HE'D TURNED ON THE RADIO...

OH! I'M SORRY! I THOUGHT...

THAT'S OKAY! LEAVE IT ON! IT'S NICE MUSIC!

THE RUSH OF WARM AIR FROM THE HEATER FELT GOOD AS THE STRANGER FOUND THE SWITCH AND TURNED IT ON! THE MUSIC FROM THE RADIO WAS SOFT AND SOOTHING! RAIN DROPS CHATTERED HAPPILY ON THE METAL ROOF...

AS LONG AS WE'RE GOING TO BE TOGETHER FOR A WHILE, I MIGHT AS WELL INTRODUCE MYSELF! MY NAME'S *CHARLES BEEKER!*

YOU CAN CALL ME *BERT,* CHARLIE!

SUDDENLY, THE SOFT MUSIC FROM THE RADIO WAS CUT SHORT BY A GRUFF IRRITATING VOICE...

...WE BRING YOU MORE NEWS ABOUT THE *DANGEROUS MANIAC* THAT *ESCAPED* FROM THE *STATE HOSPITAL FOR THE CRIMINALLY INSANE* EARLIER THIS EVENING.

SAY! DID YOU HEAR THAT?

SH-H-H-H! LISTEN!

A STATEWIDE *DRAGNET* IS OUT FOR THIS MAN! *MOTORISTS* IN THIS SECTION ARE *WARNED* TO *EXERCISE PRECAUTIONS!* POLICE BELIEVE HE WILL ATTEMPT TO *HITCH* A *RIDE* IN AN EFFORT TO PROCURE A *CAR* FOR HIS *ESCAPE!* THIS IS A *WARNING!* THE MAN IS A *HOMICIDAL MANIAC*...A *KILLER*...

I LOOKED AT CHARLIE, MY NEW-FOUND CAR COMPANION! HE WAS STARING AT THE TINY HOLES IN THE DASHBOARD AS IF HE COULD SEE THE ANNOUNCER WHOSE VOICE WE WERE HEARING! SUDDENLY THE FULL MEANING OF WHAT THE RADIO VOICE WAS SAYING HIT ME...

...IF YOU ARE DRIVING... DO NOT PICK UP STRANGERS! I REPEAT! IF YOU ARE DRIVING... *CLICK!*

CHARLIE! YOU... YOU TURNED IT OFF!

AH! WHO WANTS TO LISTEN TO THAT JUNK! OKAY! SO WE *WON'T* PICK UP STRANGERS!

I STUDIED HIM! HIS HOLLOW STARING EYES MET MINE! SUDDENLY A LOOK OF UNDERSTANDING CROSSED HIS SEEDY FACE...

HOLY CRIPES! YOU... YOU THINK *I... ME?* TAKE IT *EASY*, BERT! DON'T *WORRY!* I'M JUST A...

I... I *DID* PICK YOU *UP*... BACK THERE...

CHARLIE REACHED INTO HIS POCKET! I SLIPPED MY HAND INTO *MY* POCKET... SEARCHING FRANTICALLY FOR SOMETHING TO PROTECT MYSELF WITH! MY HAND CLOSED ABOUT MY SWITCH-KNIFE! I PRESSED THE BUTTON AND THE BLADE SNAPPED OPEN! CHARLIE DREW A WALLET FROM HIS COAT...

LOOK, BERT! HERE'S MY *IDENTIFICATION!* I'M A FACTORY WORKER! GOT A *JOB* WAITIN' FOR ME IN DENVER!

I... I SEE!

I RELEASED MY HOLD ON THE OPEN KNIFE IN MY POCKET WITH RELIEF AND SMILED...

YOU CAN'T *BLAME* ME FOR BEING *NERVOUS*, CHARLIE! AFTER ALL...

I UNDERSTAND, BERT! YOU NEEDN'T HAVE ANY FEARS! I... I DON'T *LOOK* LIKE A *HOMICIDAL MANIAC*, DO I?

I SHOOK MY HEAD! CHARLIE TURNED ON THE RADIO AGAIN...

LET'S SEE IF THEY GOT ANYTHING NEW ON THIS... *NUT!*

GOOD IDEA!

THE MUSIC SWELLED UP! MEANWHILE THE RAIN WAS GETTING HEAVIER! I COULD HARDLY SEE THE ROAD AHEAD...

WE'LL JUST KEEP TUNED! SAY! IT'S GETTIN' *BAD* OUT THERE!

YEAH! I'D HATE TO BE *OUT* IN IT!

THE IRRITATING VOICE CAME ON AGAIN, INTERRUPTING THE MELODIC STRAINS...

ANOTHER VICTIM OF THE ESCAPED MANIAC HAS BEEN FOUND LYING BESIDE THE *STATE HIGHWAY!* THE *CLOTHES* AND *IDENTIFICATION* HAD BEEN *REMOVED* FROM THE BODY. THE KILLER'S HOSPITAL GARB WAS FOUND NEARBY! HE WAS OBVIOUSLY...

I LOOKED AT CHARLIE! HE WAS SMILING AT ME SHEEPISHLY! I THOUGHT ABOUT THE WALLET HE HAD JUST SHOWN ME...

THEY'RE MAKING IT *TOUGH* ON ME, EH, BERT? YOU *STILL* LOOK SUSPICIOUS!

IT ISN'T THAT, CHARLIE! I DON'T *MEAN* TO...

THE ANNOUNCER CONTINUED...

THE ESCAPED MAN IS RATIONAL AT TIMES! HE DOESN'T *APPEAR* TO BE DANGEROUS! IT IS ONLY ON MOMENTS OF SEVERE ANXIETY THAT HE WILL BECOME VIOLENT! CITIZENS ARE WARNED...

I REACHED INTO MY POCKET AGAIN AND FINGERED MY OPEN SWITCH-KNIFE! CHARLIE SHOOK HIS HEAD AS HE STARED AT THE RADIO LOUD-SPEAKER GRILL! SUDDENLY THE CAR CAREENED INTO A DEEP PUDDLE! THE ENGINE COUGHED AND DIED...

SHE...SHE *STALLED!*

OH, BROTHER! WHAT A DESOLATE SPOT...

I TRIED TO START THE CAR AGAIN, BUT IT WAS NO USE! THE WIRES WERE PROBABLY WET! CHARLIE SQUINTED THROUGH THE RAIN-SWEPT WINDSHIELD INTO THE DARKNESS...

HEY! LOOKS LIKE A *FARMHOUSE* UP THERE! MAYBE THEY HAVE A *PHONE!*

IT'S ALL DARK! NO LIGHTS ON! IT LOOKS *DESERTED!*

CHARLIE SWUNG OPEN THE CAR DOOR AND BUTTONED HIS COAT UP TIGHTLY ABOUT HIS NECK...

C'MON! LET'S TAKE A *LOOK!*

GO AHEAD! I'LL BE RIGHT BEHIND YOU!

CHARLIE STARTED TOWARD THE DARK FARMHOUSE THROUGH THE SWEEPING RAIN! FOR A MOMENT I HESITATED...TEMPTED TO RUN THE OTHER WAY! THEN I FOLLOWED HIM! WE SPLASHED THROUGH THE MUD UP TO THE BATTERED PORCH...

LOOKS LIKE YOU WERE *WRONG,* BERT! SOMEBODY *DOES* LIVE HERE!

THEY MUST BE *ASLEEP!* I'LL *KNOCK!*

I BEAT MY FIST AGAINST THE DOOR AND WAITED! THERE WAS NO RESPONSE! I TRIED THE DOOR! IT CREAKED OPEN...

IT'S UNLOCKED! NOBODY'S HOME!

THEY MUST HAVE GONE INTO TOWN! THE RAIN PROBABLY DELAYED THEM...

I FOLLOWED CHARLIE INTO THE FARM HOUSE! IT WAS WARM AND COMFORTABLE! CHARLIE SPOTTED A RADIO...

LOOK! A RADIO! LET'S SEE WHAT'S NEW ON THAT ESCAPED KILLER!

THE MUSIC CAME UP AND FILLED THE FARMHOUSE! I WATCHED CHARLIE CAREFULLY! HE SEEMED NERVOUS... FIDGETY! SOON, THE SQUAWKING VOICE OF THE ANNOUNCER CAME ON AGAIN...

THERE HAS BEEN NO REPORT ON THE ESCAPED MANIAC FOR SEVERAL HOURS NOW! POLICE STILL BELIEVE HE IS IN THIS GENERAL VICINITY!

AND NOW FOR A DESCRIPTION OF THE DANGEROUS KILLER! HE IS...

CHARLIE SHUT THE RADIO OFF! HE TURNED TO ME APOLOGETICALLY...

AW, WHAT'S THE USE OF HEARING HIS DESCRIPTION! THOSE THINGS ARE ALWAYS SO GENERAL, ANYWAY! *I'LL* THINK IT FITS *YOU*, AND *YOU'LL* THINK IT FITS *ME*!

Y...YEAH, CHARLIE!

CHARLIE LOOKED AROUND! HE GRINNED AT ME...

LOOKS LIKE THERE'S *NO PHONE*! THAT'S TOO BAD!

YES! T-TOO BAD!

I FINGERED MY OPEN SWITCH-KNIFE IN MY POCKET! CHARLIE STARED AT ME...

WHAT ARE YOU SO NERVOUS ABOUT, BERT? YOU'RE *PALE* AS A *GHOST*!

AM I ?

CHARLIE MOVED TOWARD ME... HIS HOLLOW EYES WIDE...

YOU *STILL* THINK I'M THE *MANIAC*, DON'T YOU, BERT? YOU'RE *AFRAID* OF ME, *AREN'T* YOU?

KEEP *AWAY*, CHARLIE! *KEEP AWAY FROM ME*!

CHARLIE REACHED OUT AT ME! I DREW THE OPEN SWITCH KNIFE FROM MY POCKET...

YOU THINK I MIGHT... *HUH*? WHAT'S *THAT* YOU GOT THERE?

IT'S A *KNIFE*, CHARLIE! YOU'RE *NOT* GOING TO *KILL ME*...

CHARLIE BACKED AWAY FROM ME... FRIGHTENED ...

NO, CHARLIE! YOU WON'T GET THE *CHANCE* TO *KILL* ME!

W-WAIT A MINUTE, BERT! I...I WAS ONLY *JOKING*...

I BROUGHT THE KNIFE DOWN WITH ALL MY MIGHT! CHARLIE GASPED! A FUNNY LITTLE CHOKING SOUND CAME FROM HIS THROAT...

WELL, *I'M NOT JOKING*...

I STARED DOWN AT CHARLIE! HE WAS DEAD! HIS HOLLOW EYES WERE CLOSED AT LAST! HOW I HATED THEM! SUDDENLY A CAR DREW UP OUTSIDE...

SOMEONE'S ...OUT THERE...

TWO COPS EXPLODED THROUGH THE DOORWAY! THEY LOOKED AT CHARLIE...LYING IN A POOL OF BLOOD ON THE FLOOR! A WHITE-COATED FIGURE CAME UP BEHIND THEM...

THAT'S HIM!

WHO? THIS GUY ON THE FLOOR?

THE WHITE-COATED FIGURE SHOOK HIS HEAD...POINTING AT ME...

NO! HIM! THAT'S HIM! BE CAREFUL! HE'S GOT A *KNIFE*...

NO! YOU *CAN'T* TAKE ME BACK! *I WON'T GO*...

I STRUCK OUT SAVAGELY AS THEY CAME AT ME! SUDDENLY, EVERYTHING WENT BLACK! WHEN I CAME TO, I WAS LYING ON THE FLOOR OF A POLICE CAR, BOUND IN A STRAIT JACKET...

...HE MUST HAVE HITCHED A RIDE... KILLED THE CAR OWNER...UNDRESSED... SWITCHED CLOTHES...DUMPED THE BODY...AND CONTINUED ON IN THE CAR...

AND LATER PICKED UP THAT POOR GUY HE KNIFED BACK THERE IN THE FARMHOUSE!

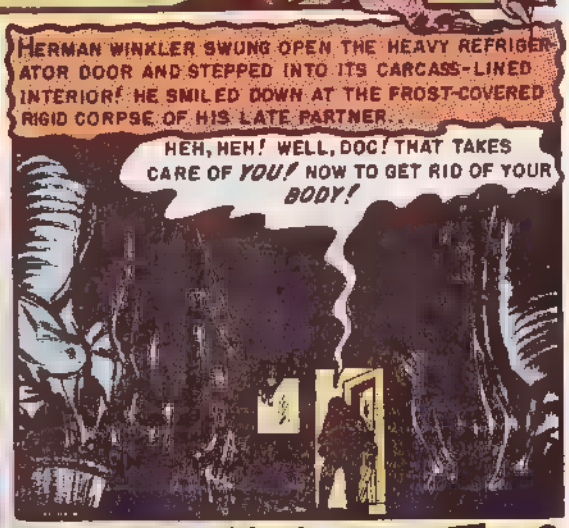
SO, NOW I'M BACK [redacted] THE STATE HOSPITAL! I'M WRITING THIS WITH A TINY PIECE OF LEAD FROM A PENCIL! THEY LET ME HAVE AN INCH AT A TIME! THEY'RE *AFRAID* TO GIVE ME A *WHOLE* PENCIL! I REALLY CAN'T UNDERSTAND IT! I DON'T *MEAN* TO HURT ANYONE! ITS ONLY WHEN THEY *THREATEN* ME! THEN I MUST *PROTECT* MYSELF! *WHY* DO YOU LOOK AT ME LIKE *THAT*? YOU *HATE* ME, DON'T YOU? *YOU* WANT TO KILL ME, *TOO!* YES...IT'S PEOPLE LIKE *YOU* I MUST *PROTECT MYSELF* FROM!

THE END

THE HAUNT OF FEAR

HEE, HEE! YES, IT'S *ME* AGAIN! *THE OLD WITCH*, MISTRESS OF *THE HAUNT OF FEAR!* READY TO LIGHT THE FIRE UNDER MY *CAULDRON* AND DISH OUT ANOTHER OF MY *MAD MORSELS OF HORROR!* READY FOR *YOUR* SERVING? THEN I'LL BEGIN THE *TASTY TALE* OF *TERROR* I CALL...

PARTNERSHIP DISSOLVED!



HERMAN SLID THE RIGID BODY FROM HIS SHOULDERS AND LET IT FALL INTO THE CLEAR LIQUID THAT FILLED THE VAT! THE SPLASH ECHOED THROUGH THE DESERTED PLANT...

HEH, HEH! AND NOW *OUR* SECRET IS ALL *MINE*...DOC! *ALL MINE!*

AS THE BODY SUNK TO THE BOTTOM OF THE VAT, HERMAN STUDIED IT! HE BEGAN TO THINK BACK...BACK TO THE FIRST TIME HE'D MET 'DOC'...

THERE'S A GENTLEMAN OUTSIDE TO SEE YOU, MR. WINKLER!

TELL HIM TO GO AWAY, MISS STONE! I'M NOT SEEING ANY...

BUSINESS HAD BEEN BAD BACK THEN! HERMAN HAD BEEN ALMOST READY TO THROW IN THE TOWEL! THE BIG PACKING HOUSE DISTRIBUTORS HAD PRACTICALLY TAKEN OVER ALL OF HIS WHOLESALE ACCOUNTS...

PLEASE, MR. WINKLER! GIVE ME FIVE MINUTES OF YOUR TIME! THAT'S ALL I ASK!

IF YOU'RE SELLING SOMETHING, I DON'T WANT IT! I...

THAT WAS 'DOC'! HE'D HUSTLED INTO HERMAN'S OFFICE WITH AN ELECTRIC APPLIANCE OF SOME KIND UNDER HIS ARM AND A SMALL BOTTLE IN HIS HAND...

ALLOW ME TO INTRODUCE MYSELF! I AM DOCTOR PAUL MERRICK! I HAVE HERE IN THIS BOTTLE A SOLUTION THAT IS GOING TO MAKE US BOTH *VERY RICH!*

THAT SO? AND *HOW* IS IT GOING TO DO *THAT?*

DOCTOR MERRICK HAD PLUGGED THE SHINY ELECTRIC APPLIANCE INTO THE WALL... THEN HAD MADE A STRANGE REQUEST...

MR. WINKLER! I'D LIKE YOU TO SEND DOWN TO YOUR REFRIGERATOR AND BRING ME THE *TOUGHEST, CHEAPEST CUT* OF MEAT YOU HAVE!

OKAY, DOC! I CAN GO ALONG WITH A GAG!

HERMAN HAD CALLED DOWN, AND THE MEAT HAD BEEN BROUGHT UP! IT HAD BEEN A CUT OF MEAT THAT WAS ESPECIALLY UNSALEABLE BECAUSE OF ITS TOUGHNESS! DOCTOR MERRICK HAD TAKEN IT AND DOUSED IT WITH HIS SOLUTION...

WHAT'S SOAKING THE MEAT WITH THAT *SOLUTION* GOT TO DO WITH IT, DOC?

YOU WILL *SEE,* MR. WINKLER! AND NOW, I AM GOING TO *BROIL* IT...

THE ELECTRIC APPLIANCE THE 'DOC' HAD BROUGHT WAS ONE OF THOSE NEW INFRA-RED BROILERS! HE'D PUT THE MEAT INTO IT AND TURNED IT ON! SOON, THE AROMA OF BROILED STEAK FILLED HERMAN'S OFFICE! WHEN IT WAS FINISHED, DOCTOR MERRICK REMOVED IT FROM THE BROILER...

AND NOW, MR. WINKLER! JUST *TASTE* IT!

LISTEN, DOC! I WOULDN'T EAT THAT *SHOE LEATHER* ON A *BET!* THAT CUT IS THE *TOUGHEST*...

BUT THE 'DOC' HAD BEEN INSISTANT, AND SO HERMAN HAD CUT A PIECE OF THE BROILED MEAT AND TASTED IT...

GOOD LORD! FILLET MIGNON! IT'S DELICIOUS! SO TENDER...

YOU SEE? DO YOU AGREE NOW THAT MY SECRET CHEMICAL SOLUTION CAN MAKE US RICH?

YOU SAID IT! JUST WHAT IS THAT STUFF, ANYWAY?

WELL, MR. WINKLER! IT IS AN EXTRACT OF PAPAYA FRUIT! AN ENZYME CALLED PAPIEN! WHEN MIXED WITH A SECRET CATALYTIC AGENT, THE SOLUTION ACTS LIKE PEPSIN, A DIGESTIVE ENZYME FOUND IN THE HUMAN BODY. IT TENDERIZES THE TOUGHEST MEAT BY A PROCESS SIMILAR TO... SAY... PARTIAL DIGESTION!

MY PLAN IS A SIMPLE ONE! BY DIPPING CHEAP CUTS OF MEAT IN THIS SOLUTION, WE CAN SELL IT AS HIGH-GRADE STEAK FOR A NOMINAL PRICE! YOUR COMPETITORS... THE BIG PACKING HOUSE DISTRIBUTORS... CAN BE UNDERSOLD!

WE'D MAKE A FORTUNE! WHAT'S YOUR PRICE, DOC?

HALF THE PROFITS, MR. WINKLER!

DOC! IT'S A DEAL! WHEN DO WE START?

AND SO, HERMAN HAD ORDERED A HUGE VAT BUILT IN AN ADJOINING ROOM TO THE HUGE REFRIGERATOR...

WELL, DOC! HOW'S IT LOOK TO YOU?

PERFECT! I'LL GET TO WORK ON THE PAPAYA SOLUTION!

THEN, THEY'D BEGUN BUYING CHEAP CUTS OF BEEF! WHEN THE MEAT WOULD ARRIVE, IT WOULD BE DIPPED INTO THE VAT FOR THE SHORT TIME NECESSARY, AND THEN WOULD BE MOVED TO THE REFRIGERATOR...

ALL RIGHT! TIME'S UP! HOIST IT OUT AND BRING IN THE NEXT LOAD!

WHAT WOULD HAPPEN IF YOU LEFT THE MEAT IN THE PAPAYA SOLUTION TOO LONG, DOC?

WHY, EVENTUALLY THE MEAT WOULD BE COMPLETELY DISSOLVED, HERMAN! IT WOULD BE AS IF IT WERE... WELL... DIGESTED... BY THE ENZYME!

OH! I SEE!

HERMAN STARED DOWN AT DOC'S BODY LYING UNDER THE CLEAR LIQUID AT THE BOTTOM OF THE VAT! IT WAS BEGINNING TO LOSE ITS SHAPE...

IT WAS GOOD OF YOU TO TELL ME HOW TO GET RID OF YOUR BODY THAT WAY, DOC! I *APPRECIATE* IT!

HERMAN REMEMBERED THE FIRST TIME HE'D THOUGHT OF GETTING RID OF 'DOC'! HE'D BEEN SITTING IN HIS OFFICE COUNTING THE FLOCK OF MEAT ORDERS THAT HAD BEGUN TO POUR IN, WHEN...

HERMAN! I HAVE THE MOST *WONDERFUL* NEWS! I JUST... *Y!!!!!*

WATCH OUT!

DOCTOR MERRICK HAD BURST IN THE DOOR AND HAD SKIDDED ON THE SCATTER RUG ON THE FLOOR! HE SAT THERE... WHERE HE HAD FALLEN...

BLASTED RUG! IT'S A *HAZARD!* A MAN COULD BE *KILLED* THAT WAY! YOU OUGHT TO GET *RID* OF IT!

HAW, HAW! YOU LOOK *CUTE,* DOC...

DOC HAD GOTTEN TO HIS FEET! THEN HE'D ANNOUNCED...

HERMAN! I'VE JUST MADE A WONDERFUL FIND! I'VE DISCOVERED HOW TO CONCENTRATE THE PAPAYA ENZYME SOLUTION SO THAT ONLY A FEW DROPS WILL MAKE A VATFUL!

THAT'S *GREAT,* DOC! NOW YOU WON'T HAVE TO BEAT YOUR BRAINS OUT MAKING IT ALL THE TIME!

MAKING ENOUGH SOLUTION HAD BEEN THE ONE THING THAT HAD LIMITED THE AMOUNT OF MEAT ORDERS THEY COULD FILL! AND DOCTOR MERRICK HAD INSISTED ON KEEPING HIS FORMULA A SECRET! AS HE HAD TOLD HERMAN ONE DAY...

AFTER ALL, HERMAN! IF I *TOLD* YOU THE *SECRET CATALYST* I USE, YOU COULD MAKE IT *YOURSELF,* AND YOU WOULDN'T *NEED* ME! THAT'S MY ONE *HOLD* ON OUR *DEAL!*

DON'T BE *SILLY,* DOC! YOU'LL ALWAYS GET YOUR SHARE! BUT WE COULD HANDLE SO MANY MORE ORDERS IF YOU COULD MAKE *MORE!*

BUT DOC HAD BEEN FIRM! HE'D JEALOUSLY GUARDED HIS SECRET! HE'D WORKED LONG AND HARD MIXING VATFULS OF THE SOLUTION! BUT THEN, WHEN HE'D DISCOVERED HOW TO CONCENTRATE IT...

I COULD MAKE ENOUGH TO LAST US *THREE MONTHS!* A QUART OF THE CONCENTRATE, USING *FIVE DROPS PER VAT,* WOULD *DO* IT!

DOC! YOU'VE BEEN WORKING *HARD!* SO HAVE *I!* WE NEED A *REST!*

WHY DON'T YOU MAKE UP A QUART OF THE CONCENTRATE AND GO AWAY FOR A *VACATION! YOUR SHARE* OF THE PROFITS IS QUITE A *ROLL!* YOU COULD HAVE SOME *FUN!*

AND WHEN I GOT BACK, *YOU'D* BE ABLE TO GO! THAT'S A WONDERFUL IDEA, HERMAN!

MEANWHILE, OF COURSE, THE FAME OF WINKLER-MERRICK MEAT HAD SPREAD! SUCH HIGH-GRADE TENDER TASTY MEAT AT SO LOW A PRICE HAD PLACED IT IN GREAT DEMAND! RETAILERS THROUGHOUT THE CITY FLOODED THEIR OFFICES WITH ORDERS...

LOOK AT THESE! ORDERS...ORDERS...AND *MORE* ORDERS! THERE'S A FORTUNE IN THE DOC'S ENZYME SOLUTION! IF IT WERE *ALL* MINE...AND I DIDN'T HAVE TO *SHARE* THE PROFITS...

AND SO, WHEN THE NEWSPAPERS ANNOUNCED DOCTOR MERRICK'S FORTHCOMING VACATION, HERMAN HAD MADE UP HIS MIND...

HERE'S THE *CONCENTRATED* PAPAYA SOLUTION, HERMAN! YOU'D BETTER KEEP IT SOMEPLACE *SAFE!*

I'D APPRECIATE IT IF YOU'D *STAY TONIGHT,* DOC, AND GIVE ME THE LOW-DOWN ON HOW TO *USE* THE STUFF!

ALL RIGHT, HERMAN! I'LL BE BACK AFTER HOURS! HMMM! I SEE YOU STILL HAVE THAT SCATTER RUG ON THE FLOOR! YOU OUGHT TO TAKE IT UP! SOMEONE'LL GET *HURT!*

HAW, HAW! I'M LEAVING IT DOWN, DOC! I'M HOPIN' YOU SKID ON IT LIKE YOU DID BEFORE! LORD, YOU LOOKED *FUNNY!*

THEN DOC HAD LEFT TO MAKE LAST MINUTE ARRANGEMENTS FOR HIS VACATION WHICH WAS STARTING THE NEXT MORNING! THAT NIGHT, AFTER THE PLANT HAD CLOSED, HE RETURNED...

IT'S QUITE SIMPLE, HERMAN! ADD *FIVE DROPS* OF THE CONCENTRATED SOLUTION TO A VAT OF CLEAR WATER! IT IS GOOD FOR ABOUT THREE THOUSAND POUNDS OF MEAT! THEN A *NEW* VATFUL MUST BE MIXED!

YES, HERMAN HAD MADE UP HIS MIND! HE'D DECIDED TO *KILL* DOC! IT WAS A SIMPLE PLAN! AS THEY'D STOOD THERE IN THE DESERTED PLANT...

...AND EVERY NIGHT YOU MUST *DRAIN* THE SOLUTION FROM THE VAT! THE CATALYST DOESN'T *LAST* OVER NIGHT! IT LOSES ITS EFFECT WHEN EXPOSED TO AIR TOO LONG!

I *SEE!* OH, BY THE WAY...

HERMAN HAD LED DOCTOR MERRICK TO THE REFRIGERATOR...

THERE'S A PIECE OF MEAT IN HERE I WANT YOU TO SEE! IT WAS RETURNED...

OH? WHERE...?

...AND AS THE DOC HAD STEPPED IN THROUGH THE DOORWAY, HERMAN HAD *SLAMMED IT SHUT...*

HERMAN! WHAT DOES THIS *MEAN?* OPEN THE DOOR! I'LL *FREEZE!*

THAT'S *EXACTLY* THE IDEA, DOC!

THEN HERMAN HAD BOLTED THE REFRIGERATOR DOOR AND HAD WAITED UNTIL THE POOR DOCTOR HAD FROZEN TO DEATH! NOW, HE STARED DOWN INTO THE VAT AS THE LAST TRACES OF THE DOC'S FROZEN BODY DISSOLVED IN THE PAPAYA ENZYME SOLUTION...

HEH, HEH! THEY'LL THINK YOU LEFT ON YOUR *VACATION*... AND JUST... *DISAPPEARED!*

HERMAN OPENED THE DRAIN VALVE OF THE VAT AND THE SOLUTION RAN OUT! THEN HE RETURNED TO HIS OFFICE...

NOW, I'LL TAKE A *SAMPLE* OF THIS CONCENTRATED PAPAYA ENZYME TO A *CHEMIST* AND HAVE IT *ANALYZED*... AND THE FORMULA WILL BE *ALL MINE!*

HERMAN PUT THE DECANTER OF THE REMAINING SOLUTION INTO HIS SAFE! THEN HE TOOK THE BOTTLED SAMPLE AND LEFT! LATER, AT A CHEMIST'S LABORATORY...

YES! I'D LIKE THE CONTENTS ANALYZED! HOW LONG WILL IT TAKE?

WE'LL HAVE THE REPORT TOMORROW NIGHT!

THE NEXT DAY, IN HIS OFFICE...

MORNIN', MR. WINKLER! THE VAT'S FILLED! WE'VE BEEN WAITING FOR YOU TO GIVE US THE 'GO AHEAD' ON THE DIPPING!

OH! I'LL BE RIGHT WITH YOU, JOHN!

HERMAN OPENED THE SAFE, TOOK OUT THE DECANTER OF CONCENTRATED SOLUTION, AND MEASURED OUT...

FIVE DROPS! HMMM! THIS MUST BE A *POWERFUL* SOLUTION!

THEN HE GAVE THE GLASS WITH THE TINY PORTION OF THE CONCENTRATED DIGESTIVE ENZYME TO THE WAITING EMPLOYEE...

HERE! FIRST, EMPTY THIS INTO THE VAT! COME UP FOR MORE AFTER YOU'VE DIPPED THREE THOUSAND POUNDS OF MEAT!

YES, SIR!

HERMAN PUT THE DECANTER BACK INTO THE SAFE! LATER THAT DAY HE RECEIVED A CALL FROM THE CHEMIST...

WHAT? THAT'S *IMPOSSIBLE!*

I'M SORRY, SIR! WE'VE ANALYZED THE SOLUTION AS *PAPAYA ENZYME*... BUT THE *CATALYST* USED IN IT IS *UNKNOWN* TO US! WE *CAN'T TELL YOU WHAT IT IS!*

HERMAN EXPLODED! DOC WAS DEAD! IF THEY COULDN'T IDENTIFY THE CATALYTIC AGENT IN THE SECRET SOLUTION, ALL WAS LOST! THEN...
MR. WINKLER! ONE OF THE MEN IS OUTSIDE! HE SAYS THEY'VE DIPPED THREE THOUSAND POUNDS!
WHA...? OH! ALL RIGHT! I'LL BE RIGHT OUT!
HERMAN OPENED THE SAFE AND TOOK OUT THE DECANTER! HE PLACED IT ON HIS DESK...
THIS...THIS MIGHT BE ALL THAT'S LEFT OF DOC MERRICK'S SECRET FORMULA! THREE MONTHS SUPPLY!
THEN HERMAN MEASURED OUT THE FIVE DROPS! AS HE CROSSED HIS OFFICE...
YAAAAAAAAAA!
THE SCATTER RUG SKIDDED ACROSS THE ROOM! HERMAN'S FEET SHOT OUT FROM UNDER HIM! EVERYTHING WENT BLACK! WHEN HE CAME TO, HIS SECRETARY, MISS STONE, WAS BENDING OVER HIM...
WHA... HAPPENED...
THERE! THERE! YOU FELL AND HIT YOUR HEAD, MR. WINKLER! HERE! DRINK THIS WATER!
DIZZILY, HERMAN DRAINED THE GLASS! IT TASTED STRANGE! SUDDENLY HIS HEAD CLEARED! HE FELT A BURNING PAIN IN THE PIT OF HIS STOMACH! HE LOOKED AROUND! THE DECANTER WAS HALF EMPTY...
OH, MY GOD! DID YOU... GIVE ME...THE STUFF... FROM THAT?
WHY, YES, SIR! IT'S WATER...ISN'T IT? I... I...MR. WINKLER!
MISS STONE WATCHED HORRIFIED AS HERMAN BEGAN TO SCREAM! THE CONCENTRATED DIGESTIVE ENZYME WAS WORKING FAST! MR. WINKLER BEGAN TO WRITHE ABOUT THE FLOOR! SOON HIS BODY BEGAN TO SHRIVEL...TURNING BLUE! HIS SCREAMS DIED IN A CHOKING GURGLE! THE FORM OF HIS BLACKENING BODY DISSOLVED INTO A DARK PUTRID MASS! A FOUL, RANCID ODOR WAFTED UPWARD FROM THE QUIVERING, SEETHING POOL! MISS STONE TURNED AWAY AND SCREAMED...
EEEEEEEEEEE!
HEE, HEE! AND SO, HERMAN ENDED UP SCATTERED ALL OVER THE SCATTER RUG...COMPLETELY DIGESTED FROM THE INSIDE OUT... WHICH MUST BE QUITE A SENSATION, EH, KIDDIES? ANYTIME YOU'D LIKE TO KNOW HOW IT FEELS, I HAVE WHAT'S LEFT OF THE DECANTER OF CONCENTRATED PAPAYA ENZYME HERE IN THE HAUNT OF FEAR! JUST COME OVER AND HELP YOURSELF TO A SNORT! IT OUGHT TO HAVE QUITE A KICK! AND YOU'LL GET A KICK OUT OF ALL THE OTHER E-C MAGAZINES, TOO! LOOK FOR THEM!

The Old Witch